

Censorship, oppression, and one-sided thoughts are characteristics of Communist China, not America, and certainly should not be the characteristics of America's great universities—to the contrary.

One of the most important ways to compete with and win against Communist China is to ensure that America—and, yes, our universities—remain what they have traditionally been: laboratories of free expression, free thought, creativity, innovation, and ingenuity.

My simple amendment will help make sure this happens, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote yes to support this amendment, an America of free liberty, free thinking, and innovation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on Sullivan amendment No. 1911.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to amendment No. 1911. It is an amendment that claims to be about protecting free speech but that could actually have a very chilling effect on speech at our institutions of higher education.

I share the goal of fostering campus environments that protect free speech and the free exchange of ideas, but I have multiple concerns with the way this amendment goes about advancing those goals. It is not the role of the National Science Foundation or the inspector general of the National Science Foundation to police speech on campuses.

Deciding what is appropriate regulation of speech should not be left to agencies that are not experts in constitutional analysis or in issues related to First Amendment protections at our institutions of higher education.

I believe it would be a mistake to use today's amendment to make substantial change without the opportunity for input from students, educators, and stakeholders. I have heard from many institutions of higher education, as well as civil rights groups, who strongly share my concerns.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, with all due respect to my colleague from Washington, when the universities say they can't do this because it is too burdensome, again, to me that actually demonstrates the very problem my simple amendment is trying to resolve.

All it is saying is in exchange for the tens of billions of dollars that Amer-

ica's universities will be getting as part of the Endless Frontier Act, they have to do one simple thing: once a year, send a letter to the National Science Foundation saying—and this is in the amendment right here—they have committed to protecting free speech, viewpoint diversity, the free exchange of ideas, academic freedom, and the protection of religious liberty, and prohibiting against discrimination.

That is it, Mr. President. It is very simple. This is what universities should be doing. It is a letter, once a year, that is very simple in exchange for billions and billions of Federal research dollars. I certainly hope all of my colleagues will support this amendment—simple, needed.

Again, this is how we outcompete communist China, which is all about what the Endless Frontier Act is focused on.

I encourage my colleagues to vote yes.

#### VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1911

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 207 Leg.]

##### YEAS—49

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Barrasso  | Grassley   | Risch      |
| Blackburn | Hagerty    | Romney     |
| Boozman   | Hawley     | Rounds     |
| Braun     | Hoeben     | Rubio      |
| Burr      | Hyde-Smith | Sasse      |
| Capito    | Inhofe     | Scott (FL) |
| Cassidy   | Johnson    | Scott (SC) |
| Collins   | Kennedy    | Shelby     |
| Cornyn    | Lankford   | Sullivan   |
| Cotton    | Lee        | Thune      |
| Cramer    | Lummis     | Tillis     |
| Crapo     | Marshall   | Toomey     |
| Cruz      | McConnell  | Tuberville |
| Daines    | Moran      | Wicker     |
| Ernst     | Murkowski  | Young      |
| Fischer   | Paul       |            |
| Graham    | Portman    |            |

##### NAYS—51

|              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Heinrich     | Peters     |
| Bennet       | Hickenlooper | Reed       |
| Blumenthal   | Hirono       | Rosen      |
| Blunt        | Kaine        | Sanders    |
| Booker       | Kelly        | Schatz     |
| Brown        | King         | Schumer    |
| Cantwell     | Klobuchar    | Shaheen    |
| Cardin       | Leahy        | Sinema     |
| Carper       | Lujan        | Smith      |
| Casey        | Manchin      | Stabenow   |
| Coons        | Markey       | Tester     |
| Cortez Masto | Menendez     | Van Hollen |
| Duckworth    | Merkley      | Warner     |
| Durbin       | Murphy       | Warnock    |
| Feinstein    | Murray       | Warren     |
| Gillibrand   | Ossoff       | Whitehouse |
| Hassan       | Padilla      | Wyden      |

The amendment (No. 1911) was rejected.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:03 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

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#### ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise today kind of expressing the frustration of many of my constituents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had Federal Agencies and employees not working at all—not from home, not in the office, period. Have not had a lick of work for over 14 months.

In April, the Senate Finance Committee had a hearing entitled “The Social Security Administration During COVID: How the Pandemic Hampered Access to Benefits and Strategies for Improving Service Delivery.”

Now, following the hearing and in response to my concerns that seniors in my State with issues getting their Social Security benefits are not being sufficiently served due to field and local offices being closed, my office got a letter from Commissioner Andrew Saul. The letter states:

I urge you to encourage the unions to continue engaging in meaningful dialogue with management that includes a focus on the very best service to the public.

That is a nice way of saying: We need help getting the unions to the table so we can get Federal employees back to work.

Now, we are talking about mandatory services, reopening Social Security offices for in-person visits in a postvaccine world to assist elderly Americans—my grandparents, your grandparents—having issues with their benefits. This isn't happening because government employees are not showing up.

It brings to mind an old quote from an old Governor in Louisiana, Earl Long. They asked Governor Long: How many people do you have working at the capitol? And he looks off into space, and he goes: Working? About two.

Now, in this case, that is the way it is going with this. The situation at the Department of Veterans Affairs, in connection with the National Archives and specifically the National Personnel Records Center, is even worse. According to the National Archives, the backlog of veterans' records grew to more than 499,000 requests in April of 2021. They estimate it will take 18 to 24 months to clear once the National Personnel Records Center is staffed at full capacity.

I just want to make this point. We have 499,000 ignored document requests from veterans. The people who have served our country are not being served in their current life.

Despite the widespread availability of vaccines and the recent relaxation of COVID-19 guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Personnel Records